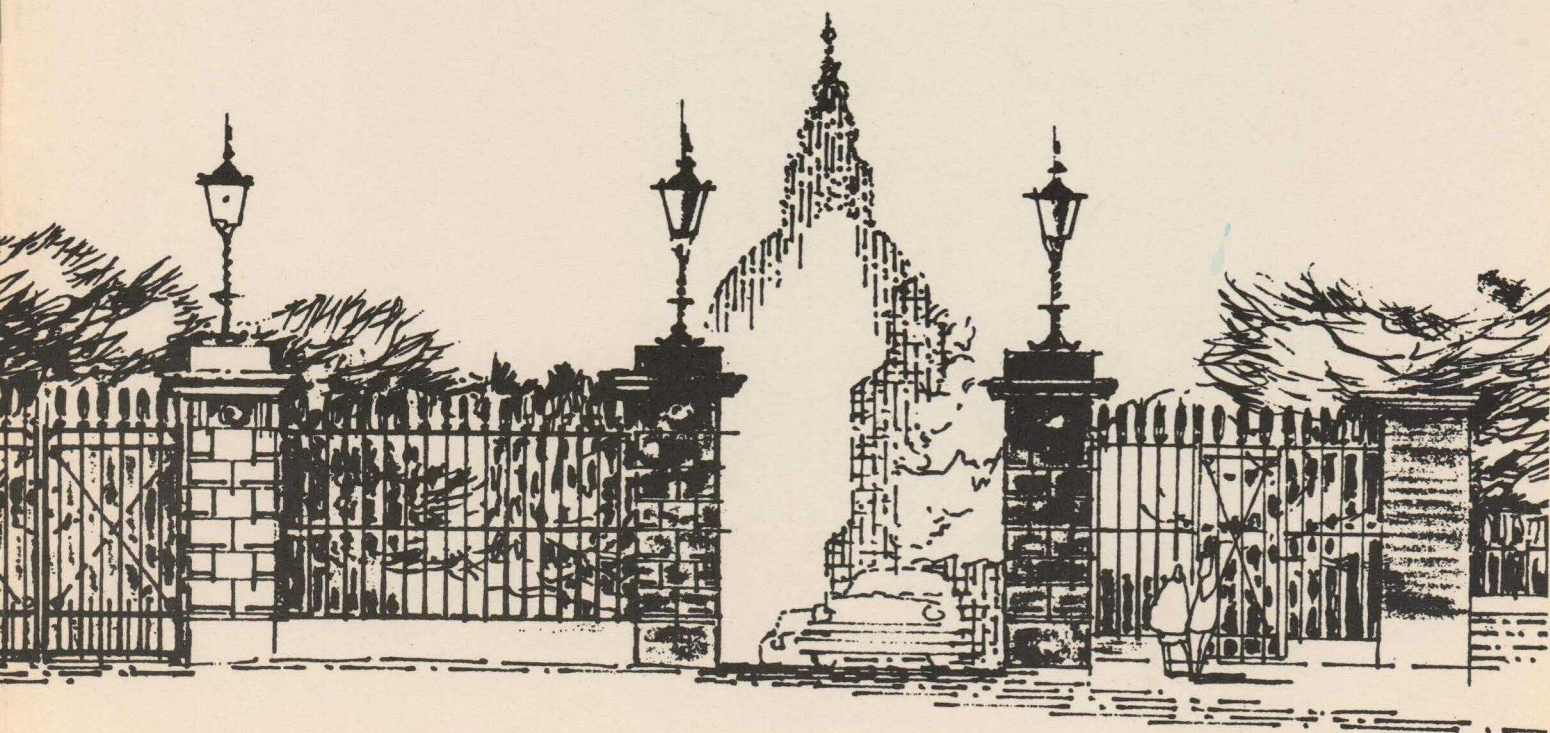


THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL REPORT
December 1981





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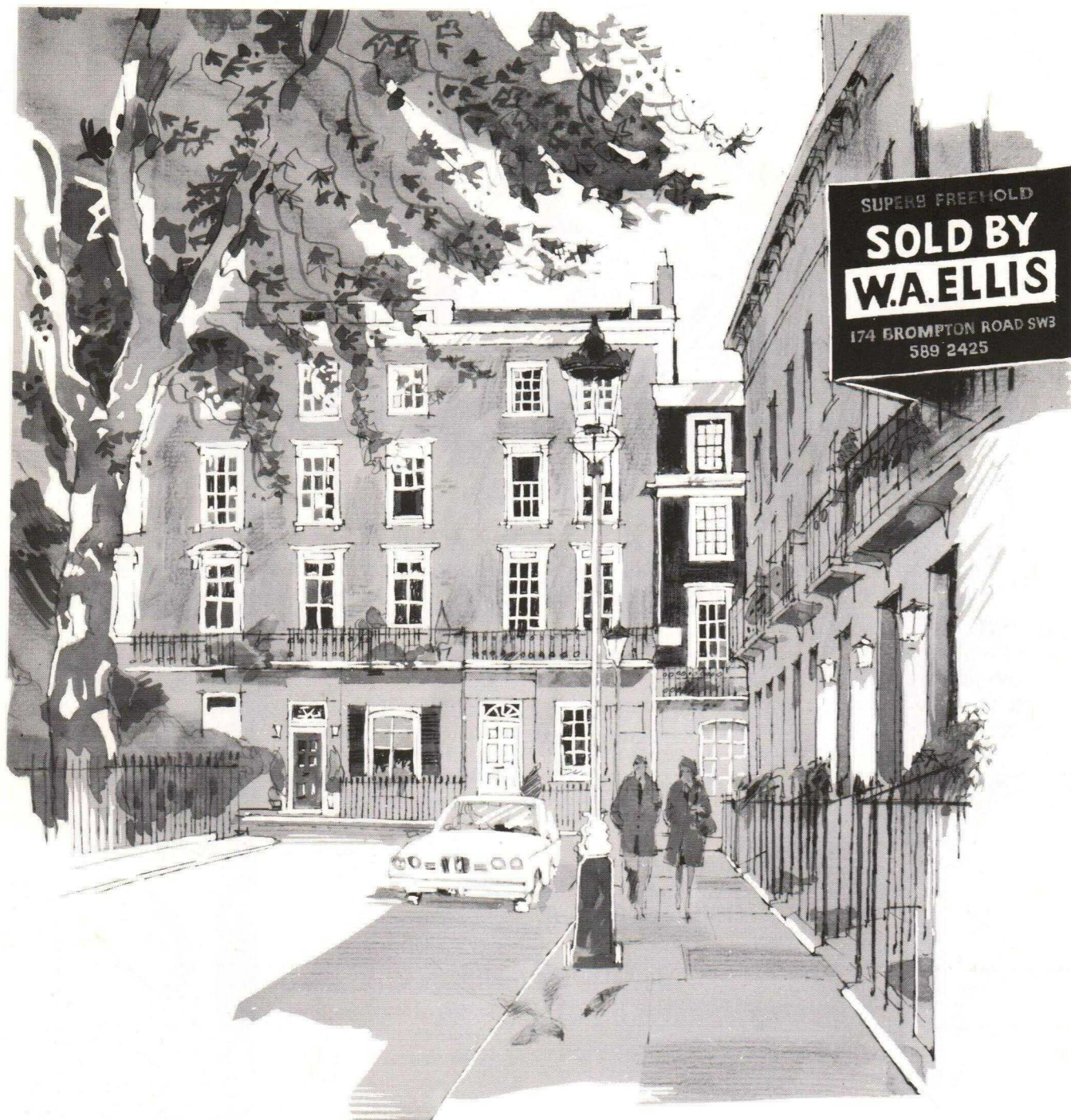
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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Another year has passed and the Knightsbridge Association has continued its efforts to protect and enhance the environment and the amenities of Knightsbridge.

As I forecast in my last Review, this has been a busy year. Despite the economic situation, there has been a resurgence of property development involving much investigation and scrutiny. The traffic and litter problems continue from year to year, and it is a constant battle to maintain the

quality of life in our neighbourhood. That we continue to make progress is due to the support and encouragement of our general body of members.

There are many individuals who have helped and assisted in our work and it is impossible to thank them all. I must, however, say a special word of thanks to Carol Seymour-Newton, our Honorary Secretary, whose constant and tireless efforts have made our endeavours truly effective.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Every year this report pays tribute to the hard work and dedication of the members of the Environment Committee which performs the most important function of the Association. This year is no exception. Led by their Chairman, John Wallis, they have laboured long hours to protect the environment of Knightsbridge, studying planning applications, visiting sites, and representing our views to the Local Authorities. Every member played a significant role in the Committee's work and deliberations, but a special word of appreciation must be accorded to our two architects, Jeremy Mackay-Lewis and Michael Wright whose professional expertise is of inestimable value.

Apart from the considerable number of routine enquiries and applications referred to the Association during the period, there have been several of importance which have a significant effect on the neighbourhood. Some of these were dealt with in our newsletter which was circulated to members earlier in the year, some were forecast in last years review, and there are matters of major import which have only recently come before the Environment Committee.

A development of significance is proposed to take place at the western entrance of Rutland Gate comprising 2, 4, 6, 8 and 8a incorporating the old German Consulate. This will involve some demolition and the creation of a new building. In this case, and quite unusually, the Association has been consulted even before an application for planning consent by the architect, a well known local member of the profession. Since this is a beautiful and important area, it is hoped that we may be able to arrange for members who live locally to see the final plans themselves.

It would be heartening if I could report that numbers 1-7 on the eastern side of the entrance to Rutland Gate was nearing completion. Sadly the renovation of this terrace, which the Association was instrumental in saving from demolition, seems, at

times, to be at a standstill, but recently we have been informed that the work is expected to finish in about 18 months. Nearby in Princes Gate the Iranian Embassy is still in a dreadful state. We are in continuous touch with Westminster City Council about the building which must be saved. The matter is highly sensitive and will, it seems, take time to resolve before repairs can take place.

It is pleasing to report that 1a Ennismore Gardens Mews, the scene of a shooting tragedy which we asked the council to return to private use, has now been bought privately and is being renovated, and 48 Ennismore Gardens, having been sold by the Iranian Government, is now to be converted into flats.

Three developments are taking place in Brompton Road. The outer shell of the building on the old LEB site which backs on to Cheval Place is nearing completion, which should improve the quality of life in the neighbourhood. Work has now begun on 106-110 Brompton Road which has been a concern of the Environment Committee for years. The new building will be marginally taller than the rest of the immediate terrace to the west, but considerably lower than the previous redevelopments. The Association had previously approved plans for the reconstruction of 124-126 Brompton Road behind the original facade. Unfortunately, the fabric has proved to be unsound and plans have now been submitted to rebuild the frontage in "matching style". This is a very sensitive area and proposed developments will be carefully scrutinised.

Nearby, the nurses hostel in Montpelier Street had given cause for concern because of the possibilities of its future use, but at the suggestion of a member of the Association, it has been bought by Imperial College and renovation of the building has already started.

A cause celebre in the Associations early history was the proposal to erect a dwelling in the upper gardens in Rutland Gate on the grounds that there had previously been a lodge which had been

demolished. Recently a new owner of the gardens, who made an application to build a house from which he would undertake to maintain the gardens, was refused permission by the planning authorities and appealed to the Department of the Environment.

There was much debate locally on the issue and the Association did its best to assist residents through the good offices of Mr Richard Davey who organised meetings and took soundings of the general feeling. In the event, the Inspector supported Westminster City Council's refusal to allow a new residence in the centre of an urban square garden and it is hoped that some way can be found for the gardens to be looked after for the benefit of the neighbourhood.

The Environment Committee has considered several alternative plans for the redevelopment of Relton Mews. Sadly, the imaginative modern scheme which the Committee preferred has been withdrawn, but new plans have been passed for refurbishment with the new homes retaining their garages.

Fundamental to our agreement has been an insistence on the retention of the cleansing depot which serves our area and in this we have had the accord of Westminster City Council Cleansing Department. Our suggestion that the development would be improved by moving the depot from the

middle of the mews to a less obtrusive site has been accepted and will be incorporated in the plans.

A development of major importance on which Westminster City Council has sought the Association's views is St. Georges Hospital which the Grosvenor Estate is to restore to its original condition and at the same time, exploit the adjacent site by building an office block. The Environment Committee, whilst welcoming the restoration of the Wilkins building, objected to the height of the proposed office block which would have been visible from Hyde Park Corner.

We welcome the cleaning of the Russian church in Ennismore Gardens and highly compliment the well-kept garden belonging to the office block at 243 Trevor Place facing Kensington Road.

The Environment Committee is most concerned about the annoyance and inconvenience to residents of Jays Mews by the long term development taking place at 192 and 194 Queens Gate. These large houses back on to Jays Mews and we are doing our best to alleviate the noise, dirt and general inconvenience which is being caused to residents.

It is pleasing to report that after years of pressure from the Association, the authorities have decided to list Albert Court as a grade 2 building and it, thus, received the protection already accorded to Albert Hall Mansions.

The eastern entrance to Rutland Gate where a renovation is taking place



KENSINGTON & CHELSEA DISTRICT PLAN

The Inspector's report on the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea's Town Plan has now been published. The Association made several objections to the Plan and was represented at the hearing by a chartered town planner, Mr Leslie Robinson, and evidence was given on our behalf by Mr Jeremy Mackay-Lewis.

One of our objections was immediately sustained because the Royal Borough conceded that 1-11 Montpelier Street and 132 Brompton Road had been omitted from the conservation area in error and it has now been included.

The Inspector was not able to recommend that the Association's request that the buildings in Brompton Road which adjoin Montpelier Street and back on to

Cheval Place, be designated a conservation area. This was, however, because he did not feel that it was within his powers to do so and he did, in fact, make clear that this was not an "area of opportunity" where redevelopment should be encouraged.

Whilst the Association's call for new car parks was not accepted because of shortage of finance, the Inspector did suggest that special residents parking schemes should be introduced.

The Royal Borough has now to decide whether to modify the Plan in any way following the Inspectors Report, and the Environment Committee is still studying the document in order to follow up its recommendations with the Borough Council before the Plan is finally adopted.

TRAFFIC

The intractable problem posed by the motor car, both the abuse of the area by the vehicles of others and the equally annoying problem of finding space to park one's own, has exercised the ingenuity of the Traffic Committee under its Chairman, Raymond Burton, but no startling new solutions have yet emerged. This is hardly surprising given the fact that our traffic flow is influenced by conditions further afield on trunk routes, and decisions implemented by decree such as the new bus lane in Brompton

Road. The Committee has, however, been able to identify some local problems capable of solution and has established excellent relations with the police as well as the City Engineers office, so that suggestions for alleviating some black spots by altering signing can be tried as an experiment.

The Committee is still considering suggestions for alleviating the appalling traffic conditions in the Trevors, ranging from minor alterations to a radical change in flow.

The western entrance to Rutland Gate where a development is envisaged



WESTMINSTER CITY COUNCIL

The greater part of our area lies within the City of Westminster and the Association is recognised by the Council as a consultative body on planning matters.

There is no doubt that our work is greatly eased by the excellent relations which the Association now enjoys with Officers and Members at City Hall. The courtesy and co-operation which we have received

from all departments and particularly the Planning Department, the City Engineers Office and the Cleansing Department are much appreciated.

The Councillors for the Knightsbridge Ward have, as usual, been of great assistance to us. It was a great pleasure to be able to send the congratulations of the Association to Councillor Prendergast on being awarded the CBE.

RATES

In common with other Londoners, local residents have been caught up in the recent controversy about supplementary rates and there has been much debate locally. It has been suggested that the Knightsbridge Association should become involved in resisting the demands. The Committee has debated the question,

but has concluded that the Association, having always from its inception been strictly non-political, should not become involved as a body. This is not to say that several of our members are not very active on bodies specifically concerned with this question, but it is felt that the subject is better left to organisations specifically formed for the purpose.

The Association is, of course, very interested in

the way the rates are spent. A vast amount of money is already collected from rate payers, but too little is left in the coffers of Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea Councils and by far the greater amount is spent elsewhere. Of what is left, it is a matter of priorities where the money goes. With aged services wearing out, it is of paramount importance that the first monies collected are expended on repairing and renewing these facilities and making the city work. Our prime concern should be to protect the quality of life in the city.

The Association has advised and encouraged residents in appeals to the rating authorities requesting reductions due to inconvenience and loss of amenity.

The appeal on the 9th January in Cheval Place resulted in a few small concessions, although the general result is not considered satisfactory.

The temporary reduction of 7½% on the west side of Ennismore Gardens, however, has been converted into a permanent reduction of 5% as a result of an effort organised by Suzanne Colvington.

RUBBISH

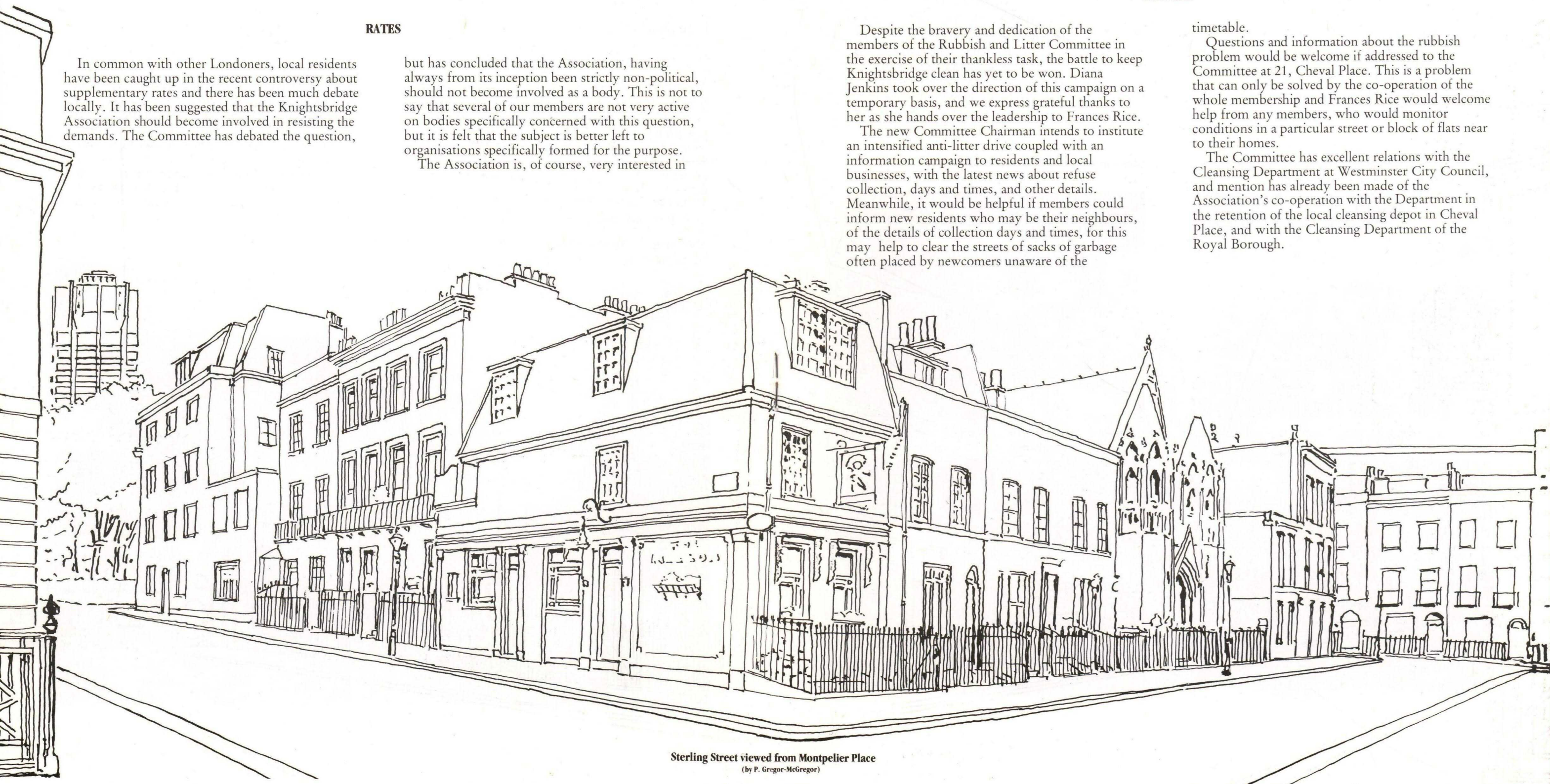
Despite the bravery and dedication of the members of the Rubbish and Litter Committee in the exercise of their thankless task, the battle to keep Knightsbridge clean has yet to be won. Diana Jenkins took over the direction of this campaign on a temporary basis, and we express grateful thanks to her as she hands over the leadership to Frances Rice.

The new Committee Chairman intends to institute an intensified anti-litter drive coupled with an information campaign to residents and local businesses, with the latest news about refuse collection, days and times, and other details. Meanwhile, it would be helpful if members could inform new residents who may be their neighbours, of the details of collection days and times, for this may help to clear the streets of sacks of garbage often placed by newcomers unaware of the

timetable.

Questions and information about the rubbish problem would be welcome if addressed to the Committee at 21, Cheval Place. This is a problem that can only be solved by the co-operation of the whole membership and Frances Rice would welcome help from any members, who would monitor conditions in a particular street or block of flats near to their homes.

The Committee has excellent relations with the Cleansing Department at Westminster City Council, and mention has already been made of the Association's co-operation with the Department in the retention of the local cleansing depot in Cheval Place, and with the Cleansing Department of the Royal Borough.



Sterling Street viewed from Montpelier Place
(by P. Gregor-McGregor)

SOCIAL & EVENTS

In March the Association was invited to visit the Royal Geographical Society in Kensington Gore to hear a lecture by the President, Professor Michael Wise, CBE, MC on the History of the Society and its interesting building, which was designed by Norman Shaw. During this most enjoyable evening, members had the opportunity of viewing many of the rooms and examining the Societies' maps and other items of historical interest. It was a popular occasion greatly appreciated by the large gathering.

In early October, a considerable audience assembled for an important address by Sir David McNee, the Commissioner of Police for the Metropolis, on the subject of "Policing London".

Following so soon after the Brixton riots and other disturbances, Sir David's authoritative words made compelling listening and his speech was followed by a deluge of eager questions. Since law and order is a subject of great significance to this neighbourhood, members were glad of this opportunity to meet the Commissioner. We were also happy to welcome in addition, Lady McNee, and several senior police officers from Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea, as well as our local officer, P.C. Goodison.

The Social & Events Committee is continually in need of ideas for future events and help in their implementation. Our Hon. Secretary, Carol Seymour-Newton, would welcome suggestions.

Lady McNee, Lady Gillett, Sir David McNee, A Senior Police Officer, Sir Robin Gillett, Neville Labovitch



John Wallis, Sir Denis Dobson



Lorraine Buckland, & The Rev. Sandy Miller



Sir David McNee & the Lord Mayor of the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea



HERITAGE

Although the principle aim of the Association is the protection of the environment and the conservation of the area from senseless and unnecessary demolition, it is also our aim to improve the amenities of the neighbourhood whenever possible, and to restore some of its attractive embellishments which have fallen into disrepair or have disappeared over the years.

Mainly due to the efforts of John Wallis, the Chairman of the Environment Committee, the principle Parks Officer of Westminster City Council agreed to the planting of six trees along the pavements of Ennismore Gardens and Princes Gardens and they are now well established.

The Association decided to establish a small fund for voluntary contributions from the immediate area to assist the Council and the appeal, having started with a generous donation from Raymond Burton,

raised over £400 which was subscribed to the project.

With pressure to decide planning applications more speedily, it has become apparent that we must plan ahead and undertake some fundamental research, if we are to be able to resist attempts to alter the atmosphere of for instance Brompton Road. To deal with this situation and to undertake an examination of proposals to reinstate railings around our squares and other improvements, we have decided to set up a small Heritage Committee. This would undertake long range work which the busy Environment Committee cannot cope with unless the research is undertaken by such another body. We are grateful that one of our members, Richard Robinson, who is also a member of the Victorian Society, has agreed to take on this task and to form a small committee of enthusiasts.

Part of the appreciative audience at Sir David McNee's lecture





The Royal Geographical Society, Kensington Gore. Picture: copyright the Royal Geographical Society

DIPLOMATIC INCURSIONS

As members were informed in our interim newsletter, the Minister has given permission for the quasi-diplomatic use of 37/38 Ennismore Gardens and 31a Brompton Square despite the great concern which was expressed in many quarters.

Although it is understood that H.M. Government

has delicate responsibilities in this direction, there is general unease about the whole position of diplomatic buildings and this difficult problem is being studied by Digby Digby-Seymour who will then make recommendations to the Committee on what course of action the Association should take.

FINANCE

The financial statement for the period is enclosed with this report. Once more it shows a healthy surplus, and again this was due to the careful husbanding of our resources by our Honorary Treasurer, Valerie de Fé.

Expenditure was at a low level and only £550 was incurred for professional fees. Secretarial expenses, too, were at an unusually low level.

In common with all other bodies, the Association's costs continue to rise, and although our reserves are adequate, our income is not sufficient for our needs. It is also necessary to maintain funds to deal with serious planning

problems requiring professional assistance. It will, therefore, be necessary to mount some fund-raising effort during the coming year.

It is with regret that I must report that Valerie de Fé is leaving the neighbourhood and must, therefore, resign as our Honorary Treasurer. She has been a tower of strength to the Committee and she will be greatly missed. She deserves the gratitude of us all for her devotion to her office and to the Association.

Our auditor, Mrs Parkinson, has retired and Cecil Halpern and Company have been appointed auditors to the Association.

THE FUTURE

The Annual General Meeting is again to be held without a visiting speaker in order to give members as much time as possible to make their views known and to debate the questions which concern us all in Knightsbridge. I hope that many of you will be able to attend and join in the proceedings.

The Committee receives a great deal of advice and suggestions from members and we try to deal with all of them as best we can. What we would be grateful for is more active help, even if it is in a

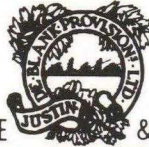
restricted field. It must never be forgotten that this is a voluntary society which is dependent on the goodwill and public spirit of all our members, and it is up to all of us to do whatever we can to keep and maintain the fabric and atmosphere of this beautiful corner of London.

November 23rd 1981
Neville Labovitch
Chairman



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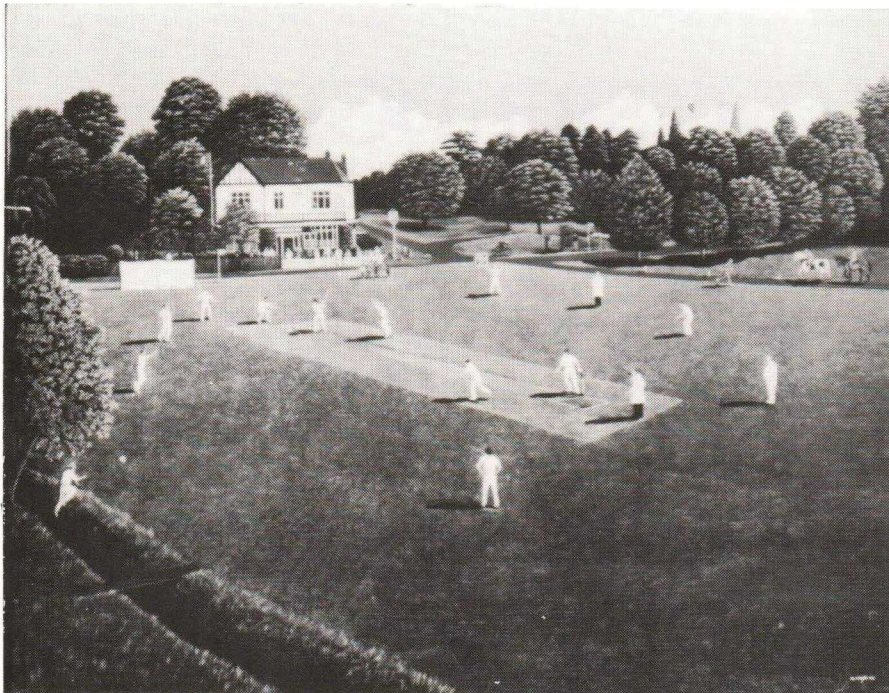
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